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HEALTH DEPARTMENT  
NEWS RELEASE



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Kent County Health Department Reminds Residents to  
Protect Against Ticks and Mosquitoes**

GRAND RAPIDS – Wet weather conditions in Kent County have many experts predicting a record number of ticks in 2013. These tiny parasites live in wooded areas, around homes, in foliage, and in fields. They can cause a number of illnesses in humans and in pets, such as Lyme disease and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever.

“Ticks live off the blood of their host, and can make the journey from one person or pet to another,” said Adam London, Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department. “West Michigan has sunny, warm weather in the forecast; many people will be heading outdoors. We recommend everyone take a few minutes to protect yourself, your family, and your pets.”

- Avoid areas with high grass;
- Walk in the center of trails when hiking;
- Wear light-colored clothing while outdoors;
- Use repellent containing DEET on exposed skin, and always follow product instructions;
- Parents should check children thoroughly for ticks, and remove any right away;
- Shower upon returning indoors, inspecting your body for ticks;
- Examine your clothing or gear for any ticks;
- Pets are susceptible to tickborne illness; talk to your veterinarian about tick collars, sprays, or monthly medications protect pets, and use only as directed.

If you find a tick has become attached to your skin, use fine-tipped tweezers, and get as close as you can to your skin's surface. Grasp the tick, and pull upward with steady, even pressure, until it disengages, but don't twist or jerk on the tick. Clean the bite area with rubbing alcohol or soap and water. **Do not use heat to make the tick detach from the skin.**

Tickborne diseases can cause fever, fatigue, and muscle aches. Lyme disease can cause a rash, as well as pain in the joints. If you have been bitten by a tick and experience these symptoms, contact your health care provider. More information can be found at [www.cdc.gov/ticks](http://www.cdc.gov/ticks).

*(More)*

KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and four satellite clinics located in Wyoming, Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit [www.accesskent.com/health](http://www.accesskent.com/health).

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In addition to ticks, mosquitoes are also a nuisance right now. The Kent County Health Department recommends individuals take certain precautions to avoid mosquitoes:

- Use insect repellent when outdoors. Apply repellent to clothing and exposed skin, and follow directions on the product label.
- Don't apply repellent under clothing, or on cuts, wounds or irritated skin. You should not apply repellent around the eyes or mouth, and if using spray, apply spray to your hands first, and then apply to face.
- Repellent should not be used on infants under 2 months old at all. KCHD recommends putting netting over the infant's stroller. DEET-containing products should be avoided for children 24 months of age or younger, and those containing *oil of lemon eucalyptus* should not to be used on children under three years of age.
- When using repellent on children, put it on your hands first, then on the child. Children tend to put their hands in or near their mouths, so don't apply repellent to a child's hands.
- After you and your children get back indoors, wash off the repellent with soap and water, and wash treated clothing before wearing again.
- At home, be sure you are not making it easy for mosquitoes to breed. Make sure to eliminate any standing water. Twice a week, empty water from birdbaths, flower pots, swimming pool covers, buckets, barrels, and cans. Make sure rain gutters are clear of debris. Throw out old tires and other items that could collect water.
- Avoid areas where mosquitoes are likely to thrive, such as wooded lots or swampy land.

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